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TWO NEW COVID-19 TESTING OPTIONS

During this time of COVID-19, the people of Leadville and Lake County have proven it again; we are resilient, and we go above and beyond to care for our friends and neighbors. In this spirit, Rocky Mountain Family Practice (RMFP), St. Vincent Hospital (SVH) and Lake County Public Health Agency (LCPHA) have remained diligent in our efforts to discover new COVID-19 testing options.

As communities are considering relaxed distancing orders, testing becomes essential to monitoring the spread of COVID-19 and collecting data on rates of infection. We are pleased to announce two tests that are now available for the COVID-19 virus and COVID-19 antibodies.

COVID-19 nasal wash test:

St. Vincent Hospital and Rocky Mountain Family Practice have broadened their criteria for COVID-19 testing. In the past weeks testing was limited to sick people who are healthcare workers or in a high-risk health category.

Now laboratories are accepting a new nasal wash test (collected in a controlled environment) in addition to the former nasal swab testing.

- Nasal wash testing is available to anyone who is sick with flu-like symptoms – at the provider's determination at SVH and RMFP.
- A nasal flush works in the following way: in their provider's office, the patient flushes the nasal cavity with saline and catches the fluid in a sterile specimen cup. The process is then repeated in the 2nd nostril. The sample is frozen and sent to a lab by the medical office.

COVID-19 antibody test:

St. Vincent Hospital (SVH) and Rocky Mountain Family Practice (RMFP) in Leadville have begun offering COVID-19 IgG antibody serum (blood) testing through Quest labs. The test is for patients who want to learn if they have Coronavirus antibodies, which would mean they have likely been infected with the virus – though they may not have symptoms. The antibody test is not used to diagnose COVID-19.

- Having COVID-19 antibodies does not mean that you are immune from getting COVID-19 in the future. Even a person who tests positive for antibodies should continue to practice precautions (i.e.) social distancing, hand washing and wearing masks.
- A COVID-19 antibody test requires a provider visit and determination. It is important to discuss this test with your provider to learn specifically what it means to you.
- A person does not need to be sick to get the antibody test.
- It typically takes one to two weeks after someone becomes infected with COVID-19 for their body to make antibodies; some people may take longer to develop antibodies.
- 2% to 10% of positive antibody results are false positives (this is similar to flu test results). False negative results are also a possibility.
- When a Coronavirus vaccine is developed in the future, even those who tested positive for antibodies should get the vaccine.

Interested in learning more about either new testing option? Call the clinic at SVH at 719-486-1264 or RMFP 719-486-0500.

There are charges associated with the antibody test, nasal wash test and provider office/telehealth visits. Out of pocket costs will vary depending on your insurance coverage. For answers to questions regarding insurance coverage for the test, speak with your insurance company or your provider's billing office. Both St. Vincent Hospital and RMFP have sliding fee scales and financial assistance programs for patients that may be uninsured or underinsured.

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